

Washington, DC -- Today, U.S. Representative Michael A. Arcuri (D-Utica) spoke on the floor of the House in favor of Whistleblower protections, expected to pass the House later today, and voted for legislation to strengthen the Freedom of Information Act and allow access to Presidential records to make government more open and accessible.

“These bills would make government more open and accessible to the people I represent - restoring faith in our government,” said Arcuri. “By helping citizens find information more easily, increasing transparency in the executive branch, and helping men and women who stand up and report government fraud and abuse, we are ensuring that the business conducted on behalf of the taxpayers of this country is conducted in an open and transparent manner.”

Today, the House passed three government accountability bills, each supported by Arcuri, to ensure the federal government is held accountable for waste, fraud and abuse. They include:

- Freedom of Information Act Amendments (H.R. 1309) which provides for more timely disclosure of government documents.
- Presidential Records Act Amendments (H.R.1255) which nullifies a 2001 Presidential executive order and restores public access to Presidential records.
- Presidential Library Donation Reform Act (H.R. 1254) which requires the disclosure of donors to Presidential libraries.

Expected to pass later today:

- Whistleblower Protection Enhancement Act (H.R. 985) which strengthens protections for federal whistleblowers to prevent retaliation against those who report wrongdoing, waste, fraud, or abuse.

“Today we will take yet another step to ensure that taxpayer dollars are wisely spent and accounted for,” said Arcuri, who spoke in favor of the Whistleblower Protection Enhancement Act on the floor of the House. “Fiscal responsibility and open government go hand in hand, protecting those who report waste and deception ensures that the government is accountable to its citizens.”

Arcuri spoke on the House floor today in support of H.R. 985. His remarks as prepared are attached below:

**The Honorable Michael A. Arcuri (NY-24)  
In the House of Representatives  
Floor Speech on the Rule Providing for Consideration of H.R. 985  
Wednesday, March 14, 2007**

I thank my good friend and Rules Committee colleague from Florida for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, “accountability” is a word often used, but seldom implemented. For the last twelve years, it’s as if Congress forgot that one of its principal responsibilities is to demand accountability from the Administration, and protect the American people from waste, fraud and abuse.

The Whistleblower Protection Enhancement Act, which this rule provides consideration for, will provide additional transparency and accountability for the way the federal government spends the tax dollars of hard-working Americans.

It’s no secret that the only way we can truly gather first-hand accounts of instances where waste, fraud and abuse occur is from the people on the inside – the federal employees. Unfortunately, not all federal employees are currently protected from being fired if they unmask corruption or other fraudulent activities going on inside the Administration.

This legislation goes right to the heart of the issue by extending much-needed whistleblower protections to federal government employees working on national security, government contractor employees and Transportation Security Employees, including baggage screeners at

our airports. It only makes sense that federal employees – especially those who have undergone extensive background investigations, obtained security clearances, and handled classified information on a routine basis – be afforded the same rights and whistleblower protections as other federal employees.

In addition, this legislation would abolish the Circuit Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit's Supreme Court-like jurisdiction over hearing whistleblower appeal cases, and allow the appropriate federal appeals court in each circuit to hear such cases. If an initial decision is rendered by a district court within the Second Circuit, the appeal should be heard in the Second Circuit. The current appeals structure for hearing whistleblower cases not only places a hefty financial burden on individuals who would have to travel from across the country to DC just have their appeal heard, it also impairs our nation's legal system by overburdening one court.

As a former district attorney, I know from experience that having the ability to draw on decisions from similar cases, rendered by different courts, benefits all parties involved and enhances our country's exceptional legal system. Further, these changes would conform the appellate process for whistleblower cases with that of all other cases.

Mr. Speaker, it is time to level the playing field for all federal employees who have the courage to stand up for the American people. I urge all my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to support this rule and the Whistleblower Protection Enhancement Act.

Thank you, I yield back the balance of my time.

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